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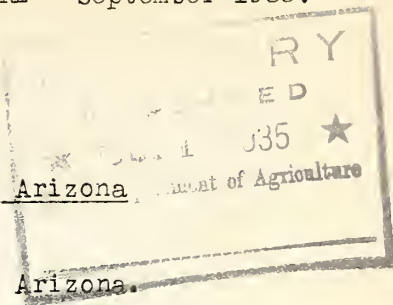
Bureau of Animal Industry

Animal Husbandry Division

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Poultry Culture in the Salt River Valley of Arizona

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Although the poultry production of Arizona is small in comparison with that of many other States, it is of enough importance in the State's agricultural development to warrant consideration by those engaged in, or considering engaging in, farming as the means of livelihood. Most of the poultry is near the city of Tucson and in the Salt River Valley of which the city of Phoenix is a part.

The poultry population is apparently not large enough to supply Arizona's demands for eggs except during the peak of production, but it is the opinion of the writer that there should be only a few farms devoted exclusively to poultry in the Salt River Valley. The place for poultry seems to be in relatively small flocks as a part of a system of diversified farming. The Single Comb White Leghorn is the most popular variety, with the Rhode Island Red second in numbers.

Irrigated and Desert Areas

The Salt River Valley irrigation project is located in Maricopa County, Arizona, and comprises approximately 242,000 acres of land irrigated by water from the Roosevelt Dam. Thousands of acres of land adjacent to the project proper are also irrigated; according to the 1930 census there were about 383,000 acres of irrigated land in Maricopa County. There are also large areas of unirrigated land in the county which will not grow crops because of the inadequate rainfall, but which may be utilized for poultry. Unirrigated land sells for a much lower price than land in the irrigated sections, but it is necessary either to drill wells or haul the water needed for domestic purposes.

Climate

The principles of successful poultry culture are the same regardless of climatic conditions, but certain features such as housing may differ among localities because of differences in climate. The local climate is termed "sub-tropical". The winters are mild with temperatures seldom going below the freezing point, but summer temperatures are high. During all seasons there is considerable difference between day and night temperatures, the range sometimes being as great as 40°F. during the summer. The relative humidity is low during all seasons. High winds of any material duration are practically unknown. The average length of the growing season for crops is 296 days. The average annual precipitation is less than eight inches.

Brooding

Electricity is available in all the irrigated section and is used extensively for brooding. Oil-burning brooders are also used, but few, if any, coal-burning brooders are in use. Chicks are generally brooded for six weeks or less, the length of time depending upon the season of the year. The best time to start brooding chicks when the pullets are to be saved for layers is believed to be March for the lighter breeds such as Leghorns, and February or March for the general-purpose and meat breeds.

It has been demonstrated in carefully conducted experiments that chicks may be brooded successfully and economically in tents instead of in the customary brooder houses. Tent brooding is becoming popular among poultrymen in the Salt River Valley and in other regions of the Southwest where climatic conditions are favorable.

Housing After the Brooding Age.

Because of the mild climate and light precipitation, houses for growing chickens and mature stock may be simple and inexpensive, consisting of a concrete or wooden floor, a corrugated iron roof, and wire-mesh sides. Chickens range outside during the entire year and houses are used mainly for the protection of the nests and other equipment. Commercially for at least ten years and experimentally for seven years, chickens have been kept successfully without houses after the brooding age. The "houseless" system, which consists in placing the roosts and dropping boards in the open without cover and providing the other equipment with a shade of palm leaves or other suitable material, seems to represent the minimum in housing expense.

Feed stuffs

Practically all feeds necessary for poultry keeping are produced locally. Those feeds include yellow(red) milo, hegari, wheat, barley, alfalfa leaf meal, meat scraps, dried buttermilk, and limestone. Green feeds such as alfalfa are grown during most of the year.

Markets

Except at the peak of the season during the late spring months, reasonably good prices are received for poultry meat with colored birds selling at a higher price per pound than white. Reasonable prices are also received for eggs, with brown eggs selling for less than white. That the price received for eggs is sometimes greater than in neighboring States is frequently noticed during the spring months when truck loads of eggs are imported which causes a lowering of the price of eggs on the local market.

Diseases

With the exception of coccidiosis, poultry diseases prevail locally about as they do in other localities. Because of the abundance of sunshine and scarcity of moisture, a good poultryman may find it easier to control certain poultry diseases here than elsewhere. Coccidiosis is practically unknown. On the other hand, the fowl tick, commonly known as the "blue bug", is found here and in other parts of the Southwest. Preventing infestation by fowl ticks is a relatively simple matter, however.

Infestation by internal parasites, particularly intestinal tapeworms, seems to be the chief source of trouble along the lines of poultry diseases. It is not an exaggeration to state that the successful local poultrymen are those who prevent or control tapeworm infestation. The United States Department of Agriculture and practically every State experiment station have published information about the prevention and control of poultry diseases and parasites.

Extension and Investigational Aids

The State extension poultryman cooperates with the Maricopa County Agent, who is located at Phoenix. The State Experiment Station and the Department of Poultry Husbandry are part of the University of Arizona, Tucson. The United States Department of Agriculture maintains the U. S. Poultry Experiment Station at Glendale, Arizona, which is nine miles from Phoenix.

